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Al-Asaaleeb al-Nabawiyyah

The Prophet's Methods for Correcting People's Mistakes

English Translation

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Introduction

Bismillaah il-Rahmaan il-Raheem

In the Name of Allaah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Praise be to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds, Master of the Day of Judgement, God of the first and the last, Sustainer of heaven and earth, and peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy Prophet, the Teacher of mankind, sent as a Mercy to the worlds.

Teaching people is one of the greatest good deeds whose benefits spread to others. It is the daiy'ahs' and educators' share of the heritage of the Prophets and Messengers. "Allaah and the angels, and even the ant in its nest and the whale in the sea will pray for the one who teaches people the ways of good." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Ahmad Shaakir edn., no. 2685. Abu 'Eesa said, this is a saheeh ghareeb hasan hadeeth). There are different types and ways of teaching, with different means and methods, one of which is correcting mistakes. Correcting mistakes is a part of education; they are like inseparable twins.

Dealing with and correcting mistakes is also a part of sincerity in religion (*naseehah*) which is a duty on all Muslims. The connection between this and the concept of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, which is also a duty, is quite obvious (but we should note that the area of mistakes is broader than the area of evil (*munkar*), so a mistake may or may not be evil as such).

Correcting mistakes also formed a part of the *wahy* (revelation) and the methodology of the Qur'aan. The Qur'aan brought commands and prohibitions, approvals and denunciations and correction of mistakes – even those on the part of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). So it included rebukes and pointing out of mistakes, for example (interpretation of the meaning):

“(The Prophet) frowned and turned away,

Because there came to him the blind man [‘Abd-Allaah ibn Umm Maktoom, whilst he was preaching to one or some of the chiefs of Quraysh],

But what could tell you that perchance he might become pure (from sins)?

Or that he might receive admonition, and that the admonition might profit him?

As for him who thinks himself self-sufficient,

To him you attend;

What does it matter to you if he will not become pure (from disbelief, you are only a Messenger, your duty is to convey the Message of Allaah).

But as to him who came to you running, And is afraid (of Allaah and His Punishment), Of him you are neglectful and divert your attention to another.” [‘Abasa 80:1-10]

“And remember when you (Muhammad) said to him (Zayd ibn Haarithah – the freed slave of the Prophet) on whom Allaah has bestowed Grace (by guiding him to Islam) and you (too) have done a favour (by freeing him), ‘Keep your wife to yourself and fear Allaah.’ But you did hide in yourself (what Allaah had already made known to you – i.e. that He will give her to you in marriage) that which Allaah will make manifest, you did fear the people whereas Allaah had a better right that you should fear Him...” [al-Ahzaab 33:38]

“Not for you (O Muhammad) is the decision; whether He turns in mercy to (pardons) them or punishes them; verily, they are the zaalimoon (polytheists, disobedient, wrong-doers, etc.).” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:128]

Qur'aan was also revealed to correct the mistakes of some of the Sahaabah in some situations. When Haatib ibn Abi Balta'ah (may Allaah be pleased with him) made the mistake of writing to the kuffaar of Quraysh and informing them of the direction in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was headed on a military campaign against them, Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Take not My enemies and your enemies (i.e., disbelievers and polytheists, etc.) as friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth, and have driven out the Messenger and yourselves (from your homeland) because you believe in Allaah your Lord! If you have come forth to strive in My Cause and to seek My Good Pleasure, (then take not these disbelievers and polytheists, etc., as your friends). You show friendship to them in secret, while I am All-

Aware of what you conceal and what you reveal. And whosoever of you (Muslims) does that, then indeed he has gone (far) astray, (away) from the Straight Path.” [al-Mumtahinah 60:1]

Concerning the mistake made by the archers at the battle of Uhud, who left the position where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had commanded them to stay, Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“... until (the moment) you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed after He showed you (of the booty) which you love. Among you are some that desire this world and some that desire the Hereafter...” [Aal- ‘Imraan 3:152]

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stayed away from his wives in order to discipline them, and some people spread rumours that he had divorced them, Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people), if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly)...” [al-Nisa’ 4:83]

When some of the Muslims failed to migrate from Makkah to Madeenah with no legitimate excuse, Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily! As for those whom the angels take (in death) while they are wronging themselves (as they stayed among the disbelievers even though emigration was obligatory for them), they (angels) say (to them): ‘In what (condition) were you?’ They reply: ‘We were weak and oppressed on earth.’ They (angels) say: ‘Was not the earth of Allaah spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?’...” [al-Nisa’ 4:97]

When some of the Sahaabah believed and repeated the rumours of the munaafiqeen accusing ‘Aa’ishah of something she was innocent of, Allaah revealed aayaat concerning this lie, including (interpretation of the meaning):

“Had it not been for the Grace of Allaah and His Mercy unto you in this world and in the Hereafter, a great torment would have touched you for that whereof you had spoken. When you were propagating it with your tongues and uttering with your mouths that whereof you had no knowledge, you counted it a little thing, while with Allaah it was very great.”

[al-Noor 24:14]

Then Allaah said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And why did you not, when you heard it, say – ‘It is not right for us to speak of this. Glory be to You (O Allaah), this is a great lie’?

Allaah forbids you from it and warns you not to repeat the like of it forever, if you are believers.”

[al-Noor 24:16-17]

When some of the Sahaabah argued in the presence of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and raised their voices,

Allaah revealed (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Do not put (yourselves) forward before Allaah and His Messenger, and fear Allaah. Verily! Allaah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

O you who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as you speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds may be rendered fruitless while you perceive not.”

[al-Hujuraat 49:1-2]

When the caravan came at the time of the Friday khutbah, and some of the people left the khutbah and dispersed to engage in trade, Allaah revealed the words:

“And when they see some merchandise or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave you (Muhammad) standing [while delivering the Friday khutbah]. Say: ‘That which Allaah has is better than any amusement or merchandise! And Allaah is the Best of Providers.”

[al-Jumu’ah 62:11]

Many other examples also indicate the importance of correcting mistakes and not keeping quiet about them.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was guided by the Light of his Lord in following the principle of denouncing evil and correcting mistakes with no compromise. From this and other reports the scholars (may Allaah have mercy on them) derived the principle: it is not permitted for the Prophet to delay speaking up and explaining mistakes at the appropriate time.”

Understanding the Prophet’s methodology in dealing with the mistakes of the people he met is of great importance, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was guided by his Lord, and his words and deeds were supported by the *wahy*, and confirmed or corrected as needed. His methods are wiser and more efficacious, and using his approach is the best way to get people to respond positively. If the one who is in a position to guide and teach others adopts these methods and this approach, his efforts will be successful. Following the method and approach of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) also involves following his example, for he is the best example for us, and this will lead us to a great reward from Allaah, if our intention is sincere.

Knowing the methods of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) exposes the failure of the man-made methodology – which is followed everywhere on this earth – and proves to the followers of that methodology that it is a failure. Much of it is clearly a deviation that is based on corrupt theories such as absolute freedom, or it is derived from false heritages such a blind imitation of one’s fathers and forefathers.

We must point out that the practical application of this methodology in real life relies heavily on *ijtihaad* (studying the situation and attempting to determine the best approach) to a great extent. This involves selecting the best methods for a particular situation. Whoever understands people’s nature will be able to notice similarities between real life situations and situations described in the texts, so he will be able to choose the most appropriate method

from among the methods of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

This book is an attempt to study the methods of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in dealing with mistakes made by people of different levels and backgrounds, among those who lived with him and with whom he interacted. I ask Allaah to make it successful and free of mistakes, to benefit my Muslim brothers and me through it, for He is in control of all things and He is able to do this, and He is the Guide to the Straight Path.

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Points to be noted when dealing with mistakes

Before we embark on our discussion we should note some issues and considerations that we should bear in mind before and when dealing with and correcting the mistakes of others.

Sincerity towards Allaah

When correcting the mistakes of others, it is essential that one's intention be to earn the pleasure of Allaah, not to demonstrate one's superiority or to vent one's anger or to impress others.

Al-Tirmidhi (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported from Shufayy al-Asbahi that he entered Madeenah and saw a man with people gathered around him. He asked, "Who is this?" They said, "Abu Hurayrah." [Shufayy said:] "So I approached him and sat down in front of him. He was speaking to the people, and when he finished and they had gone away, I said to him, 'I ask you by Allaah, to narrate to me a hadeeth that you heard from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and understood fully.' Abu Hurayrah said, 'I will do that, I will tell you a hadeeth I heard from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and understood fully.' Then Abu Hurayrah began to gasp, and remained in this condition until he recovered, then he said, 'I will tell you a hadeeth that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told me in this house when there was no one else present except me and him.' Then Abu Hurayrah began to gasp again, then he recovered and wiped his face, and said, 'I will tell you a hadeeth that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told me in this house when there was no one else present except me and him.' Then he gasped, then he recovered and wiped his face and said, 'I will tell you a hadeeth that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told me in this house when there was no one else present except me and him.' Then Abu Hurayrah began to gasp severely, and his head fell forward, and I supported him with my shoulder for a long time, then he recovered, and said: 'The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told me: 'When the Day of Judgement comes, Allaah will come down to judge between the people. And every nation will be kneeling in submission. The first people to be called forth will be a man who had learned the Qur'aan by heart, a man who was killed for the sake of Allaah and a man who had a lot of wealth. Allaah will say to the reader, 'Did I not teach you that which I had revealed to My Messenger?' He will say, 'Of course, My Lord.' Allaah will say, 'What did you do with what you were taught?' He will say, 'I stayed up at night and during the day (to recite it).' Allaah will say, 'You have lied,' and the angels will say, 'You have lied.' Allaah will say, 'You only wanted it to be said that so-and-so is a reader, and it was said.' The one who had a lot of wealth

will be brought and Allaah will say to him, 'Did I not give generously to you so that you were not in need of anyone?' He will say, 'Of course, O Lord.' Allaah will say, 'What did you do with what I gave you?' He will say, 'I used to give it to my relatives and in charity.' Allaah will say, 'You have lied,' and the angels will say, 'You have lied.' Allaah will say, 'You only wanted it to be said that so-and-so is generous, and it was said. Then the one who was killed for the sake of Allaah will be brought and Allaah will say to him, 'What were you killed for?' He will say, 'I was commanded to fight in jihaad for Your sake so I fought until I was killed.' Allaah will say, 'You have lied,' and the angels will say, 'You have lied.' Allaah will say, 'You only want it to be said that so-and-so was courageous, and it was said.' Then the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) struck my knees and said, 'O Abu Hurayrah, these three are the first people for whom the Fire will be heated on the Day of Resurrection.'" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, no. 2382, Shaakir edn. Abu 'Eesa said: this is a ghareeb hasan hadeeth).

If the intention of the person giving advice is sincere, he will earn reward and his advice will be accepted and acted upon, by the permission of Allaah.

- Making mistakes is part of human nature.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Every son of Adam makes mistakes, and the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2499, and by Ibn Maajah, who narrated this version – *al-Sunan*, ed. by 'Abd al-Baqi, no. 4251)

Bearing this fact clearly in mind will put things into their proper perspective, so the educator should not expect people to be perfect or infallible or judge them according to what he thinks they should be, and then consider them to have failed if they make a big mistake or err repeatedly. He should deal with them in a realistic manner, based on his knowledge of human nature which is subject to ignorance, negligence, shortcomings, whims and desires and forgetfulness.

Understanding this fact will also prevent an educator from being greatly shocked by the kind of sudden mistake that could lead him to react in an inappropriate fashion. This will remind the da'iyah and educator who is striving to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil that he too is a human being who could also make the same mistake, so he should deal with him on a footing of compassion rather than harshness, because the basic aim is to reform, not to punish.

But this does not mean that we should leave people who are making mistakes alone, or find excuses for those who are committing sins on the basis that they are only human or that they are just youngsters, or that the modern age is full of temptations and so on. We must denounce the actions and call the people to account, but at the same time we must evaluate their actions according to Islam.

- Saying that someone is wrong should be based on shar'i evidence and proper understanding, not on ignorance and that fact that one happens not to like it. Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir reported that Jaabir prayed wearing only an *izar* (lower garment wrapped around the waist) tied at the back [the reason for this is that they did not have trousers, and they would wear their izar tied at the back because this was more concealing when they did rukoo' and sujood. *Fath al-Baari*, al-Salafiyyah edn., 1/467], and his other clothes were on a clothes hook. Someone said to him, 'Are you praying in one garment?' He said, 'I only did it so

that some foolish person like you would see me. Who among us had two garments at the time of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)?" (Reported by al-Bukhaari, *al-Fath*, no. 352). Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "What is meant by 'foolish' here is 'ignorant'... The purpose was to explain that it is permissible to pray wearing only one garment, although wearing two garments is preferable. It is as if he was saying, 'I did it on purpose to show that it is permissible, so that one who does not know could follow me in that or he could rebuke me so that I could teach him that it is permissible.' The reason why his answer was so harsh was so that he could teach them not to rebuke the scholars and to urge them to look into shar'i matters themselves." (*al-Fath*, 1/467)

- The more serious a mistake is, the more effort should be made to correct it.

Efforts to correct mistakes that have to do with *'aqeedah* should be greater than those to correct mistakes that have to do with etiquette, for example. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was intensely concerned about dealing with and correcting mistakes that had to do with *shirk* in all its forms, because this was the most important matter. Examples of this follow:

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah said: "There was an eclipse of the sun on the day that [the Prophet's infant son] Ibraaheem died, and the people said, 'This eclipse is because of the death of Ibraaheem.' The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'The sun and the moon are two of the signs of Allaah, they do not become eclipsed for the death or life of anyone. If you see them (eclipsed) then call on Allaah and pray to Him until the eclipse is over.'" (Reported by al-Bukhaari, *Fath*, 1061).

Abu Waaqid al-Laythi reported that when the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) went out to Hunayn, he passed by a tree belonging to the mushrikeen that was called Dhaat Anwaat, on which they used to hang their weapons. They said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, make for us a Dhaat Anwaat like they have.' The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, 'Subhaan-Allaah! This is like what the people of Moosa said, "Make for us a god as they have gods." By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will follow the ways of the people who came before you.'" (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2180. He said, This is a saheeh hasan hadeeth).

According to another report narrated by Abu Waaqid, they went out from Makkah with the Messenger of Allaah to Hunayn. He said: "The kuffaar had a lotus-tree to which they were devoted and on which they used to hang their weapons; it was called Dhaat Anwaat. We passed by a big, green lotus-tree, and we said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, make this a Dhaat Anwaat for us.' The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you have said what the people of Moosa said to him, "Make for us a god as they have gods," and he said, "Verily, you are a people who know not." It is the same thing, and you will follow the ways of the people who came before you, step by step.'" (Reported by Ahmad, *al-Sunan*, 5/218).

Zayd ibn Khaalid al-Juhani said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) led us in Subh (Fajr) prayer at al-Hudaybiyah just after it had rained in the night. When he finished, he turned to the people and said, 'Do you know what your Lord says?' They said, 'Allaah and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'This morning one of My slaves became a believer in Me, and one a disbeliever. As for the one who said, we have been given rain by the

Grace and Mercy of Allaah, he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars; and as for him who said, we have been given rain by such-and-such a star, he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars.” (Reported by al-Bukhaari, *Fath*, no. 846).

Ibn ‘Abbaas reported that a man said, “O Messenger of Allaah, whatever Allaah and you will.” He said, “Are you making me equal to Allaah? [Say instead:] What Allaah alone wills.” (Reported by Ahmad, *al-Musnad*, 1/283).

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with them both) reported that he caught up with ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab who was with a group of people and was swearing by his father. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) called them and told them that Allaah had forbidden them to swear by their forefathers; the one who wanted to swear an oath should swear by Allaah or else keep quiet. (Reported by al-Bukhaari, *Fath*, 6108)

Note: Imaam Ahmad reported in his *Musnad*: Wakee’ told us that al-A’mash told us from Sa’d ibn ‘Ubaydah who said: “I was with Ibn ‘Umar in a circle and he heard a man in another circle saying, ‘No, by my father.’ So Ibn ‘Umar threw pebbles at him and said, ‘This is how ‘Umar used to swear, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade him to do this and said that it was *shirk*.’” (*al-Fath al-Rabbaani*, 14/164).

Abu Shurayh Haani’ ibn Yazeed said: “A delegation of people came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he heard them calling one of them Abd al-Hajar (“slave of the stone”). He asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘ ‘Abd al-Hajar.’ The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, ‘No, you are ‘Abd-Allaah (slave of Allaah).’” (Reported by al-Bukhaari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 813. Al-Albaani said in *Saheeh al-Adab al-Mufrad* that it is saheeh, no. 623).

- Taking into account the position of the person who is striving to correct the mistake

Some people’s advice may be more readily accepted than others’ because they have a status that others do not, or because, unlike others, they have authority over the person who has made the mistake, for example, a father with his child or a teacher with his student or a government official with the one whom he is inspecting. One who is older is not like one who is younger, a relative is not like a stranger, a person with authority is not like one with no authority. Understanding these differences will make the reformer put things into perspective and evaluate them properly, so that his rebuke or correction will not lead to a greater evil. The position of the one who is rebuking and the esteem in which he is held by the one who has made the mistake are very important in judging how strong the rebuke should be and deciding how harsh or gentle the tone should be. From this we learn two things:

Firstly, that the person to whom Allaah has given status or authority should use that to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and to teach people. He should understand that he has a great responsibility because people will accept more from him than from other people – usually – so he can do more than others can.

Secondly, the person who seeks to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil should not misjudge the situation and put himself in a higher position than is in fact the case and behave as if he has qualities that he does not have, because this will only put people off.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) made the most of the position of respect that Allaah had given him when he was rebuking and teaching people. He did things that would not have been appropriate if they were done by anyone else, examples of which follow:

Ya'eesh ibn Tihfah al-Ghiffaari reported that his father said: "I was a guest of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), one of the poor to whom he played host. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came out to check on his guests during the night, and saw me lying on my stomach. He kicked me and said, 'Don't lie like this; this is the kind of lying that Allaah hates.'" According to another report: "He kicked him and woke him up, and said, 'This is how the people of Hell lie.'" (Reported by Ahmad, *al-Fath al-Rabbaani*, 14/244-245. Also reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2798, Shaakir edn.; by Abu Dawood in *Kitaab al-Adab* in his *Sunan*, no. 5040, al-Da'aas edn. The hadeeth is also in *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 2270-2271).

This method of rebuking was appropriate for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) because of his position and status, but it is not appropriate for ordinary people. It is not alright for any person who wants to rebuke another for sleeping on his stomach to kick him whilst he is asleep and wake him up, and then expect him to accept this advice and thank him for it. The same applies to hitting a person who is making a mistake or throwing something like pebbles or whatever at him. Although some of the salaf did that, it was because of their particular status. Some stories of this nature follow:

Al-Daarimi (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported from Sulaymaan ibn Yassar that a man called Sabeegh came to Madeenah and started to ask about the ambiguous texts of the Qur'aan. 'Umar sent for him, and he had prepared some date palm branches for him (to hit him with). ['Umar] asked him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am the slave of Allaah, Sabeegh." 'Umar took hold of one of the palm branches and hit him, saying, "I am the slave of Allaah, 'Umar." He kept hitting him until his head began to bleed, and he said, "O Ameer al-Mu'mineen, enough! [The ideas that] were in my head have gone!" (*Sunan al-Daarimi*, ed. by 'Abd-Allaah Haashim Yamaani, 1/51, no. 146).

Al-Bukhaari (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported that Ibn Abi Layla said: "Hudhayfah was in al-Madaa'in and asked for a drink, and a grandee gave him a vessel of silver. He threw it at him and said, 'I would not have thrown it, but I told him not to do it and he didn't stop. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade us from wearing silk and brocade, and from drinking from vessels of gold and silver. He said, 'These are for them in this world and for you in the Hereafter.'" (*al-Fath*, no. 5632).

According to a report narrated by Ahmad, describing the same incident, 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Abi Layla said: "I went out with Hudhayfah to one of these areas, and he asked for something to drink. A grandee brought him a vessel of silver and he (Hudhayfah) threw it in his face. We said, 'Be quiet, be quiet, if we ask why he did it, he might not tell us.' So we were quiet, and a little while later he said, 'Do you know why I threw it in his face?' We said, 'No.' He said, 'I had told him not to do it. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Do not drink from vessels of gold," and Mu'aadh said, "Do not drink from vessels of gold or silver, and do not wear silk or brocade; these are for them in this world and for you in the Hereafter."'" (*al-Musnad*, 5/396)

Al-Bukhaari narrated that Seereen asked Anas to write him a contract of manumission, as he had plenty of money, but Anas

refused. Seereen went to 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him), who told Anas to write the document, and Anas still refused, so 'Umar hit him with a whip whilst reciting the words (interpretation of the meaning): "... give them [slaves seeking emancipation] such writing [of a document of manumission], if you know that they are good and trustworthy..." [al-Noor 24:33], so he wrote the document for him. (Al-Fath, 5/184).

Al-Nisaa'i reported from Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that he was praying when a son of Marwaan came in front of him, so he checked him, and when he did not go back, he hit him. The boy went out crying, and went to Marwaan and told him what had happened. Marwaan asked Abu Sa'eed, "Why did you hit the son of your brother?" He said, "I did not hit him, I hit the Shaytaan. I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: 'If any one of you is praying and someone wants to pass in front of him, let him stop him as much as he can, and if he refuses then fight him, for he is a devil.'" (al-Mujtaba min Sunan al-Nisaa'i, 8/61; Saheeh Sunan al-Nisaa'i, no. 4518)

Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported from Abu'l-Nadr that Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri was suffering from a sore leg, and his brother came in and saw him lying with one leg crossed over the other, so he hit him on the sore leg, making it hurt even more. He said, "You hurt my leg! Didn't you know it is sore?" He said, "Of course I knew." He said, "What made you do that?" He said, "Did you not hear that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade us to sit like this?" (al-Musnad, 3/42)

Maalik reported from Abu'l-Zubayr al-Makki that a man proposed marriage to another man's sister, and he [the brother] told him that she had committed zinaa. News of this reached 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, so he hit him or nearly hit him, and said, "Why did you tell him?" (Muwatta' Maalik, no. 1553, report of Abu Mus'ab al-Zuhri, ed. by Bashshaar Ma'roof and Mahmood Khaleel. Mu'sasat al-Risaalah).

Muslim reported in his Saheeh from Abu Ishaaq who said: "I was with al-Aswad ibn Yazeed in the Great Mosque, and al-Sha'bi was with us. Al-Sha'bi told us about what Faatimah bint Qays had said about the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) not providing housing or an income for her. Al-Aswad took a handful of pebbles and threw them at him, saying, 'Woe to you! You talk about something like this? 'Umar said that we should not leave the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) for the words of a woman who we cannot be sure has remembered things properly or not. Women have the right to accommodation and an income. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "... and turn them not out of their homes, not shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of some open illegal sexual intercourse..." [al-Talaaq 65:1]." (Saheeh Muslim, no. 1480).

Abu Dawood reported, with an isnaad in which two men are maqbool, that two men entered from the doors of Kindah, when Abu Mas'ood al-Ansaari was sitting in a circle. The two men said, "Is there any man who will judge between us?" A man in the circle said, "I will." Abu Mas'ood took a handful of pebbles and threw them at him, saying, "Shut up! It is disliked to hasten to judgement." (Reported by Abu Dawood, Kitaab al-Aqdiyah, Bab fi talab al-qada' wa al-tasarru' ilayhi)

We should also note that the Prophet's rebuking of some of his closest Companions was, on occasions, harsher than his rebuking of a bedouin, for example, or a stranger. All of this has to do with wisdom and proper evaluation in rebuking.

- Making a distinction between one who errs out of ignorance and one who errs despite his knowledge

One of the stories that illustrate this clearly is what happened to Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam al-Salami when he came to Madeenah from the desert, and he did not know that it is forbidden to speak during the salaah. He said: "Whilst I was praying behind the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), a man sneezed, so I said 'Yarhamuk Allaah (may Allaah have mercy on you).' The people glared at me, so I said, 'May my mother lose me! What is wrong with you that you are looking at me?' They began to slap their thighs with their hands, and when I saw that they were indicating that I should be quiet, I stopped talking (i.e., I nearly wanted to answer them back, but I controlled myself and kept quiet). When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had finished praying – may my father and mother be sacrificed for him, I have never seen a better teacher than him before or since – he did not rebuke me or hit me or put me to shame. He just said, 'This prayer should contain nothing of the speech of men; it is only tasbeeh and takbeer and recitation of the Qur'aan.'" (*Saheeh Muslim*, 'Abd al-Baaqi edn., no. 537).

The ignorant person needs to be taught; the one who has doubts needs to have things explained to him; the negligent person needs to be reminded; and the one who wilfully persists in error needs to be warned. It is not right to treat one who knows about a ruling and one who is ignorant of it in the same manner when rebuking them. Treating one who does not know too harshly will only put him off and make him refuse to follow your advice, unlike teaching him with wisdom and gentleness, because an ignorant person simply does not realize that he is making a mistake. It is as if he is saying to the one who is rebuking him: "Why don't you teach me before you launch an attack on me?"

The one who is making a mistake without realizing it may think that he is right, so we should take this into account and deal with him tactfully. Imaam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported in al-Musnad from al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) ate some food, then got up to pray. He had already done wudoo' before that, but I brought some water for him to do wudoo'. He rebuffed me and said, 'Go away!' I felt upset, by Allaah. He prayed, and I complained to 'Umar about what had happened. He said, 'O Prophet of Allaah, al-Mugheerah feels hurt by your rebuff, and he is worried that you may be angry with him for some reason.' The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'I see only good in him, but he brought me water to do wudoo' after I had eaten some food, and if I had done wudoo' then, the people would have followed suit [i.e., they would have thought that they had to do wudoo' every time they had eaten something].'" (*al-Musnad*, 4/253)

We should note here that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) pointed out the mistakes of these great Sahaabah, it did not have a negative impact on them or put them off; rather, it had a positive effect on them, and having been corrected in this manner by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), they would remain anxious and worried, watching their behaviour and feeling concerned until they could be sure that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was pleased with them.

We may also note from this story that when the Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allaah be upon him) pointed out al-Mugheerah's mistake, he was not angry with al-Mugheerah himself; he did this out of mercy to the people and to explain things clearly to them, so that they would not impose something on themselves that was not waajib and that would cause them a great deal of hardship.

- Making a distinction between mistakes stemming from an honest effort to find out what is right (ijtihad), and mistakes done deliberately, out of negligence or because of shortcomings

There is no doubt that in the first case, a person is not to be blamed; indeed he will earn one reward even if he is mistaken, so long as his intention was sincere and he tried to reach the right conclusion, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "If a ruler judges and strives to make the right decision, and his decision is correct, he will have two rewards, and if his decision is wrong, he will still have one reward." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 1326, Shaakir edn. Abu 'Eesa al-Tirmidhi said it is a ghareeb hasan hadeeth in this version.)

This is a different case from one who errs deliberately or because of shortcomings. In the first instance, the person should be taught and advised; in the second, he should be warned and rebuked.

The ijtihad which may be excused should be done on the part of one who is qualified, not one who gives fatwas without knowledge and without taking circumstances into account. This is why the Prophet severely denounced the people who made the mistake in the case of the man with the head wound. Abu Dawood narrated in his *Sunan* from Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: "We went out on a journey, and one of the men with us was struck in the head with a stone and started bleeding. Then he slept and when he woke up he needed to do *ghusl* (he was in state of *janaabah* or impurity). He asked his companions, 'Do you think I could get away with doing *tayammum*?' They said, 'We don't think you have any excuse because water is available.' So he did *ghusl*, and he died. When we came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he was told about this, he said, 'They have killed him, may Allaah kill them! Why did they not ask if they did not know? The cure of the one who does not know is to ask...'" (*Sunan Abi Dawood, Kitaab al-Tahaarah, Baab al-majrooh yatayammum*; al-Albaani classed it as hasan in *Saheeh Abi Dawood*, 325, and indicated that the extra material added at the end of the hadeeth is *da'eef*)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said that judges are of three types, one will be in Paradise and the other two in Hell. The type that will be in Paradise is a man who knows the truth and judges accordingly. A man who knows the truth but judges unjustly will be in Hell, and a man who judges between people without proper knowledge will also be in Hell. (*Sunan Abi Dawood*, no. 3573; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *al-Irwa'*, 2164). The third type is not regarded as having any excuse.

Another factor in gauging the degree of rebuking is paying attention to the environment in which the mistake occurred, such as whether it was an environment in which the Sunnah is followed or bid'ah is widespread, or how prevalent evil is, or whether there are ignorant or overly lenient people, whose opinions are widely followed, issuing fatwas to say that it is permissible.

- A good intention on the part of the one who makes the mistake does not mean that he should not be rebuked

'Amr ibn Yahya said: "I heard my father narrating from his father who

said: 'We were at the door of 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood before the early morning prayer. When he came out we walked with him to the mosque. Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari came up to us and said, "Did Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan come out to you yet?" We said, "No." He sat down with us until [Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan] came out. When he came out, we all stood up to greet him, and Abu Moosa said to him: "O Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan, earlier I saw in the mosque something that I have never seen before, but it seems good, al-hamdu Lillaah." He said, "And what was it?" He said, "if you live, you will see it. I saw people in the mosque sitting in circles waiting for the prayer. In every circle there was a man, and they had pebbles in their hands. He would say, 'Say *Allaahu akbar* one hundred times,' and they would say *Allaahu akbar* one hundred times; then he would say, 'Say *Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah* one hundred times,' and they would say *Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah* one hundred times; then he would say, 'Say *Subhaan Allaah* one hundred times,' and they would say *Subhaan Allaah* one hundred times.' He asked, 'What did you say to them?' He said, 'I did not say anything to them; I was waiting to see what your opinion would be and what you would tell me to do.' He said, 'Why did you not tell them to count their bad deeds and guarantee them that nothing of their good deeds would be wasted?' Then he left, and we went with him, until he reached one of those circles. He stood over them and said, 'What is this I see you doing?' They said, 'O Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan, these are pebbles we are using to count our *takbeer*, *tahleel* and *tasbeeh*.' He said, 'Count your bad deeds, and I guarantee that nothing of your good deeds will be wasted. Woe to you, O ummah of Muhammad, how quickly you are getting destroyed! The Companions of your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) are still alive, his garment is not yet worn out and his vessels are not yet broken. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, either you are following a way that is more guided than that of Muhammad or you have opened the door of misguidance!' They said, 'By Allaah, O Abu 'Abd al-Rahmaan, we only wanted to do good.' He said, 'How many of those who wanted to do good failed to achieve it! The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us that people recite Qur'aan and it does not go any further than their throats. By Allaah, I do not know, maybe most of them are people like you.' Then he turned away from them. 'Amr ibn Salamah said, 'I saw most of the members of those circles fighting alongside the Khawaarij on the day of Nahrawaan.'" (Reported by al-Daarimi, *al-Sunan*, no. 210, ed. by 'Abd-Allaah Haashim al-Yamaani. Al-Albaani classed its isnaad as saheeh in *al-Silsilat al-Saheehah* under hadeeth no. 2005. See *Majma' al-Zawaa'id* by al-Haythami, 1/181).

- Being fair and not being biased when correcting those who make mistakes

Allaah says (interpretation of the meanings):

"And whenever you give your word (i.e., judge between men or give evidence), say the truth..." [al-An'aam 6:152]

"... and when you judge between men, you [should] judge with justice..." [al-Nisa' 4:58]

The fact that Usaamah ibn Zayd was the beloved of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the son of his beloved [Zayd] did not stop the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) from rebuking him most sternly when he tried to intercede regarding one of the punishments (*hudood*) prescribed by Allaah. 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) reported that Quraysh were concerned about a woman who stole at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), at the time

of the Conquest of Makkah. They said, 'Who will speak to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about her? Who will dare to do this other than Usaamah ibn Zayd, the beloved of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)?' She was brought to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and Usaamah ibn Zayd spoke to him concerning her. The face of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) changed colour and he said: 'Are you interceding concerning one of the punishments prescribed by Allaah?' Usaamah said to him, 'Pray for forgiveness for me, O Messenger of Allaah.' When evening came, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stood up and addressed the people. He praised Allaah as He deserves to be praised, then he said: 'The people who came before you were destroyed because if one of their nobles stole, they would let him go, but if one of the weak among them stole, they would carry out the punishment on him. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if Faatimah the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would cut off her hand.' Then he ordered that the woman who had stolen should have her hand cut off." (The hadeeth was reported by al-Bukhaari and Muslim; this version was narrated by Muslim, no. 1688).

According to a report narrated by al-Nisaa'i from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her), she said: "A woman borrowed some jewellery, claiming that she wanted to lend it to someone else, but she sold it and kept the money. She was brought to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Her family went to Usaamah ibn Zayd, who spoke to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) concerning her. The face of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) changed colour whilst Usaamah was speaking, then the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to him: 'Are you interceding concerning one of the punishments prescribed by Allaah?' Usaamah said, 'Pray for forgiveness for me, O Messenger of Allaah.' In the evening, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stood up, praised Allaah as He deserves to be praised, then said, 'The people who came before you were destroyed because if one of their nobles stole, they would let him go, but if one of the weak among them stole, they would carry out the punishment on him. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if Faatimah the daughter of Muhammad were to steal, I would cut off her hand.' Then he ordered that the woman's hand should be cut off." (*Sunan al-Nisaa'i*, *al-Mujtabaa*, Dar al-Fikr edn., 8/73. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh Sunan al-Nisaa'i*, no. 4548).

The Prophet's attitude towards Usaamah (may Allaah be pleased with him) indicates that he was fair and just, and that Islam came before love of people in his view. A person may put up with the personal faults of whoever he wishes, but he has no right to be tolerant or biased towards those whose mistakes transgress the limits set by Islam.

Sometimes, when a relative or friend makes a mistake, a person does not rebuke him as he would a person whom he does not know, so one may see unIslamic bias or discrimination in his dealings because of this, and a person may turn a blind eye to his friend's mistake while harshly criticizing another person.

[An Arab poet once said:]

"If you are happy with a person, you do not see his mistakes, but if you are angry with him, you see them all."

This may also be reflected in the way in which actions are interpreted. An action on the part of a person one loves will be taken one way, and the same deed on the part of another person will be taken quite differently.

All of the above applies only when circumstances are the same, otherwise there could be different considerations as we will see below.

- Being careful lest correcting one mistake leads to a bigger mistake

It is a well-established fact that Islam allows the lesser of two evils in order to repel a greater evil. So a da'iyah may keep quiet about one mistake lest saying something lead to a more serious mistake.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) kept quiet about the munaafiqeen and did not execute them, even though their kufr was well-established. He bore their insults with patience, lest people say, "Muhammad is killing his companions," especially since their true nature was not known to everyone. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not destroy the Ka'bah in order to rebuild it on the foundations laid by Ibraaheem, out of consideration towards Quraysh who were still new in Islam and too close to their recent *jaahiliyyah*. He (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) feared that it might be too much for them, so he left it as it was, with part missing, and the door set high up and closed to the masses, even though this contains an element of *zulm* (wrongdoing or oppression).

Before this, Allaah had told the Muslims not to insult the gods of the mushrikeen, even though this is a form of worship, because this could lead to people insulting Allaah, which is the worst of evil.

A dai'yah may keep quiet about a wrong action, or defer rebuking, or change his approach, if he thinks that by doing so he will avoid a greater evil or mistake. This is not considered to be shortcoming or negligence so long as his intention is sincere and he does not fear anyone except Allaah, and it was only concern for the best interests of Islam, not cowardice, that stopped him from saying anything.

We may note that what causes a greater evil when rebuking for one mistake is zealously which is not checked or controlled.

- Understanding the human nature from which the mistake sprang

There are some mistakes which can never be fully eradicated, because they have to do with the way Allaah has created people. It is possible to reduce them a little, but going to extremes in dealing with them will lead to a disaster. Such is the case of women. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Woman was created from a rib, and she will not behave consistently towards you. If you enjoy her company, then enjoy it despite her crookedness. If you try to straighten her you will break her, and her breaking is her divorce." (Reported by Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him), no. 1468).

According to another report: "Be kind to women, for they were created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is the top. If you try to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it alone, it will stay crooked. So be kind to women." (Reported by al-Bukhaari from Abu Hurayrah. *Al-Fath*, no. 5186).

Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "The words 'treat women kindly' indicate that you should try to put them right gently,

because if you go to extremes in trying to straighten them you will break them, and if you leave them they will remain crooked... What we learn from this is that we should not leave them crooked if they go beyond the natural expected shortcomings and commit sins or neglect duties. What is meant is that we can leave them crooked with regard to permissible matters. We also learn from the hadeeth that a gentle approach wins people over and opens their hearts. It also tells us to deal with women by being easy going with them, and to bear their crookedness with patience. Whoever insists on putting them right will not benefit from them, and as a man cannot do without a woman to enjoy the pleasure of living with her and to be his support in life, it is as if he said: you cannot enjoy her company unless you put up with her." (*Fath*, 9/954).

- Making a distinction between mistakes that transgress the limits of Islam and mistakes that only affect other people

If Islam is dearer to us than our own selves, we must defend it and protect it and get angry for its sake more than we get angry for our own sakes and defend our own selves. It is a sign of not having religious feelings if we see a man getting angry for his own sake if someone insults him, but not getting angry for the sake of Allaah's religion if anybody insults it; at most, we may see him feebly defending it in an embarrassed manner.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) often used to forgive those who made mistakes in their interactions with him, especially the hard-hearted Bedouin, in order to soften their hearts. Al-Bukhaari (may Allaah have mercy on him) reported in his *Saheeh* that Anas ibn Maalik said: "I was walking with the Messenger of Allaah